POLICY ACADEMY ON HOMELESS FAMILIES AND CHILDREN:
Increasing Access to Housing and Mainstream Services for Homeless Families, Children, and Youth

VISION, MISSION, AND POTENTIAL ACTION STRATEGIES

Vision Statement

All Michigan children and families live with dignity and thrive in safe, affordable and sustainable homes in supportive communities.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the State Policy Academy on Homeless Families and Children to develop and implement a strategic plan that helps end homelessness in Michigan over the next decade. Our primary goals will include:

1) Expanding supply of and access to affordable and safe housing for homeless families, children and youth.

2) Strengthening and expanding efforts to prevent homelessness among families, children, and youth.

3) Increasing awareness and utilization of "mainstream" services and community resources for homeless families, children, and youth.

4) Increasing the quality of data and efficacy and impact of collaborative federal, state and local planning for ending homelessness among families, children, and youth.

5) Building a political agenda and public will to end homelessness for families, children, and youth.

We will initially advance this commitment by engaging state and local policy-makers, service providers, consumers, and other stakeholders in developing recommendations for incorporation into the Governor's Strategic Plan for FY 2005-2006 and articulating specific strategies and action steps that can be achieved by October 2006. In addition, our Policy Academy process will develop an achievable strategic plan (through October 2010) for action toward ending homelessness among families, children and youth.

Working Draft – 6-03-04

<u>Potential Action Strategies</u>

<u>Goal I:</u>

**Expand supply of and access to affordable and safe housing
for homeless families, children, and youth.**

a. Develop mapping of specific housing needs for homeless populations across Michigan (by County and/or Continuum of Care area)
    i. Develop specific housing production targets to meet identified need
    ii. Map local housing development initiatives already underway

b. Increase new construction of supportive housing units for homeless families with or without identifiable special needs
    i. Engage private developers in effective partnerships to expand the supply of supportive housing
    ii. Expand numbers of supportive housing units for homeless families produced through use of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit initiatives
    iii. Support expansion of capacity of not-for-profit housing developers to produce new units of supportive housing for homeless families
    iv. Promote public-private partnerships that increase production of new housing units for homeless families

c. Increase availability of rental subsidies targeted to homeless families and children
    i. Identify creative approaches to increase use of funding in existing public sector programs that will help to expand leasing assistance (e.g., FIA, MSHDA, DCH, MDOC, Local Government)
    ii. Expand use of HUD Supportive Housing Program to create permanent supportive housing for homeless families

d. Work with landlords and management companies to increase access to existing housing for "hard-to-house" and homeless families
    i. Identify specific barriers to use of existing units
    ii. Provide "on-call" supports for landlords
    iii. Address credit issues as barriers
    iv. Develop tools for tenant-landlord education

e. Expand use of specifically targeted Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers for homeless families and youth:
    i. Assess impact of MSHDA's pilot programs and build on "lessons learned"
    ii. Engage local Public Housing Agencies in adopting targeting and preference strategies

f. Develop and initiate implementation of a web-based statewide housing locator technology to support moving families into existing housing

g. Expand and support use of "Housing First" strategies, as appropriate, to move homeless families quickly into permanent housing
    i. Expand use of "transition in place" strategies
    ii. Expand use of HOME/Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (both at the State and local level)

h. Link affordable housing development strategies to other State-level community development initiatives
    i. Link housing development to Cool Cities initiatives
    ii. Link housing development to Workforce Housing initiatives

i. Address planning/zoning issues at local level that promote/obstruct development of supportive housing for homeless families
    i. Explore inclusionary zoning + other pro-active zoning practices
    ii. Address exclusionary planning practices and/or "NIMBY" issues
    iii. Assure that affordable housing meets acceptable habitability standards

<u>**Goal II:**</u>

**Strengthen and expand efforts to prevent homelessness
among families, children, and youth**

a. Expand support for prevention strategies in all systems and areas of service
    i. Identify new resources, or means for redirecting existing resources, to expand system-wide homeless prevention
    ii. Increase funding targeted to eviction prevention and follow-up supports

b. Develop more effective and pro-active response to precariously housed families, including:
    i. Involuntarily "doubled-up" families (households involuntarily residing with other family members/friends)
    ii. "Housing-poor" households (those paying in excess of 50% of household income towards housing costs)
    iii. Families residing in sub-standard housing

c. Enhance supports to families "at-risk" of homelessness as a consequence of:
    i. Domestic violence
    ii. Parent in drug treatment
    iii. Parent in prison
    iv. Parent in mental health treatment
    v. Refugee/immigration status

d. Expand use of income enhancement strategies (e.g., Earned Income Tax Credits, Individual Development Accounts, Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency, etc.) to increase financial viability of very low-income households

e. Increase targeting of employment and training resources to homeless heads-of- household to increase financial viability of very low-income households

f. Identify and address public policies (in FIA, DCH, MSHDA, etc.) that create unintended consequences exacerbating homelessness among families, children, and youth

g. Develop and implement institutional discharge planning and policies for all primary public systems of care
    i. Work in concert with Michigan's Department of Corrections TPCI/Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative to address issues of discharge planning from state prison systems
    ii. Work through Michigan Primary Care Association (MPCA) to address discharge planning issues regarding primary care
    iii. Work through Department of Community Health and Governor's Mental Health Commission to address discharge planning issues regarding Mental Health and Substance Abuse treatment
    iv. Work through FIA's Bureau of Family and Children's services to address discharge planning issues regarding Youth-in-Transition ("aging out" of foster care)
    v. Work through local Continuum of Care planning bodies and Human Services Collaboratives to address issues of discharge planning involving local systems of care (e.g., county jails, local mental health services, etc.)

Goal III:

Increase awareness and utilization of "mainstream" services and community resources for homeless families, children, and youth

a. Identify barriers to use of mainstream resources and services by homeless families

b. Identify, promote, and implement policies and practices that increase utilization of existing publicly funded mainstream services for homeless families, children, and youth -- in all of the following service domains:
   - Education
   - Head Start
   - Early childhood
   - Child welfare
   - Children's services
   - Children's health (MI-Child)
   - Health care
   - Substance abuse
   - Mental health
   - Medicaid
   - Rehabilitation services
   - TANF/financial supports
   - Workforce development
   - Ex-offender services
   - Veteran's services
   - Refugee services
   - Transportation
   - Other (as identified)

c. Expand and/or enhance existing state-level interagency collaborations that impact on homeless families and children

d. Dedicate/target a portion of mainstream funding resources to address specific homeless sub-populations and their needs

e. Expand investments in cross-systems training that will enhance response to needs of homeless families and children

f. Establish cross-systems accountability for assurance of services to homeless households

g. Identify and disseminate best practices for increasing access to mainstream services by homeless families, children, and youth

h. Promote cross-systems services integration as a means of increasing access to services

i. Simplify eligibility and intake processes for all mainstream services – including establishment of "NO wrong door" practices

j. Establish joint service plans and wraparound services that include non-traditional agencies (e.g., community-based service providers, mentors, faith-based organizations)

k. Provide more accessible options for substance abuse treatment for homeless families with children

l. Identify strategies for pooling and/or leveraging funds to enhance resources available for homeless families, children, and youth

m. Create a systems map of all available mainstream services and resources – for use both in enhancing planning and services delivery

n. Utilize both the Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS) and emerging statewide "2-1-1" capability to increase effectiveness of cross-systems referrals and follow-through

o. Enhance use of "one-stop" service sites to increase supports and access to services for homeless families and children

p. Address consequences of "maxed out" Medicaid funding at state level for addressing needs of homeless households

Goal IV:

Increase the quality of data and efficacy and impact of collaborative federal, state and local planning for ending homelessness among families, children, and youth.

a. Increase effectiveness of collaborative planning for use of Federal resources
    i. Use key barrier busting resources at federal level to reduce barriers to service in federal agencies (e.g., Policy Academy Technical Assistance, Interagency Council on Homelessness)
    ii. Identify, address & resolve policies that inadvertently force families into homelessness in order to qualify for help
    iii. Pursue approval of targeted waivers in demonstration projects to
    iv. Address barriers created by the labeling of "felons" that excludes eligibility for resources and services
    v. Identify program rules and regulations places where flexibility is needed and articulate that to federal officials
    vi. Resurrect the identification of policy waivers needed for implementing new programs from former policy academies

b. Increase effectiveness of planning at State level
    i. Assure effective linkages to planning occurring in other current State-level policy academies and Governor's initiatives
    ii. Use Interagency Human Service Directors convening (DCH, FIA, MDOE, DLEG) as a forum for "barrier-busting"
    iii. Assess, explore, and revise (where appropriate) existing interagency structures for planning to address homeless concerns
    iv. Consider establishing governor-appointed State-level Interagency Council on Homelessness
    v. Hold local forums and focus groups to mobilize more meaningful insight and input into identification of homeless services needs
    vi. Construct state-level systems mapping across departments providing services for homeless families and children
    vii. Identify and alter, where possible, the unintended consequences of suggested strategic plans and action steps that may exacerbate homelessness
    viii. Increase cross-systems training of policy leaders, workers, and providers
    ix. Work to create "housing consciousness" among key state agencies/workers
    x. Identify and address issues of access to services in rural communities
    xi. Identify waivers and regulatory streamlining that might help to enhance access to services
    xii. Expand use of private/public partnerships to maximize efficiencies in use of both public and private resources
    xiii. Increase investment in training and capacity-building that increases systematic outreach to homeless families with children
    xiv. Work through Community Foundations to develop demonstration projects and challenge grants that build community support for homeless response
    xv. Develop opportunities for more flexible and cross-systems funding

xvi. Assure accountability and follow through for services provided at the field level
xvii. Hold mainstream systems accountable for homeless populations as part of Governor's Cabinet strategic plan

c. Increase effectiveness of planning to end homelessness at local level
   i. Increase collaborative planning between local Continuum of Care (CoC) planning bodies and local Multi-Purpose Collaborative Bodies (MPCB's)
   ii. Enhance partnerships between homeless planning groups and Workforce Development Boards
   iii. Support increasing linkage between homeless planning and community-based health planning
   iv. Increase supports for long-term planning at local level
   v. Work with local "participating jurisdictions" to assure that all "consolidated Plans" for HUD address planning for ending homelessness in their communities

d. Enhance quality and availability of data for planning and response to needs of families
   i. Clarify key data development and research needs
   ii. Expand implementation of Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System (MSHMIS) to include mainstream and supportive services providers (e.g., school district homeless liaisons, health care providers, VA counselors, mental health systems, food pantries, faith-based organizations)
   iii. Identify and disseminate "best practices" in selected areas of practice (e.g., children's services, employability supports, residential treatment, homeless prevention)
   iv. Identify key "risk factors" for homelessness among families
   v. Work through Department of Information Technology and other partnerships to develop approaches for cross-systems data compilation and comparison
   vi. Include "housing status" information in all mainstream services assessments
      ▪ Utilize new obligations under "No Child Left Behind" Act to engage school district homeless liaisons to capture data on homeless families and children
      ▪ Insert "housing status" assessment as standard element of all intakes/assessments in all State and federally-funded programs (e.g., FIA, Mental Health, Health, Head Start)
   vii. Develop descriptive "cost analysis" of services provided to homeless families

Goal V:

Build a political agenda and public will to end homelessness
for families, children, and youth

a. Develop and implement mechanism for regularly informing and updating State legislative and congressional delegations on homeless issues and related legislative concerns

b. Cultivate congressional and legislative "champions" for ending homelessness in Michigan

c. Identify key legislative changes needed for "ending homelessness" in Michigan in next decade and recruit legislative sponsors

d. Develop and implement mechanisms for regularly informing and updating State Board of Education and Children's Cabinet on homeless issues

e. Engage in series of public hearings and forums to clarify homeless policy concerns at local level

f. Engage key stakeholders (e.g., providers, funders, consumers, housing providers, faith community, public officials) in building public support for ending homelessness

g. Assure timely integration of Homeless Family Policy Leadership Team recommendations (as appropriate) into Governor's Cabinet Action Plan for 2005-'06

h. Engage Office of Governor in promoting understanding of homeless issues and needs

i. Create ongoing structure to disseminate information on needs of homeless families

j. Engage media (print, radio, television, and electronic) in broadening dissemination of stories on homelessness

k. Enhance utilization of "Homeless Awareness Week" as opportunity for expanding statewide attention to homeless issues and concerns

l. Develop and implement pilot programs that engage communities in mobilizing both human and financial supports for homeless response